Bronze no Tenshi
Volume 4 Chapter 15

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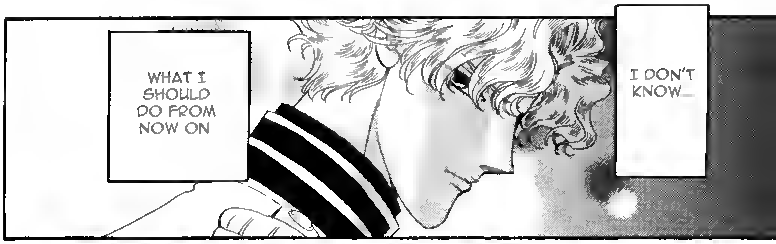
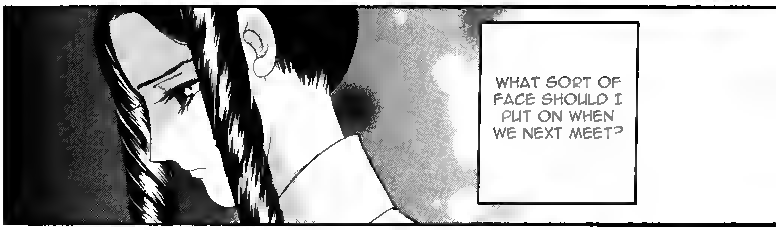
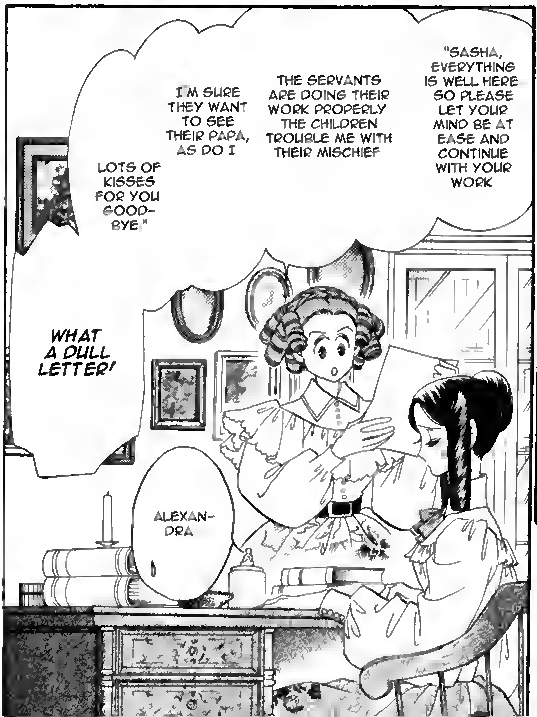
Vol. 15 Love Prelude

SINCE THEN
I HAVE A FEELING THAT EVERY-THING HAS CHANGED.

WE ARE ALWAYS CONSCIOUS OF EACH OTHER
WE CAN NEVER RETURN
TO THE TIME DURING WHICH WE FELT NOTHING

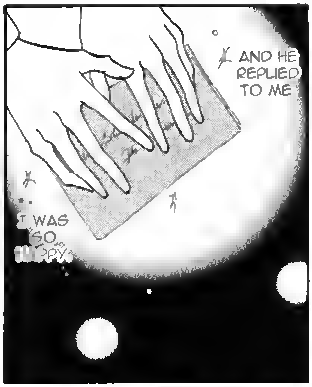

WHAT I SHOULD DO FROM NOW ON
I DON'T KNOW...


WHAT SORT OF FACE SHOULD I PUT ON WHEN WE NEXT MEET?


"SASHA, EVERYTHING IS WELL HERE SO PLEASE LET YOUR MIND BE AT EASE AND CONTINUE WITH YOUR WORK
THE SERVANTS ARE DOING THEIR WORK PROPERLY THE CHILDREN TROUBLE ME WITH THEIR MISCHIEF
I'M SURE THEY WANT TO SEE THEIR PAPA, AS DO I
LOTS OF KISSES FOR YOU GOOD-BYE."
WHAT A DULL LETTER!
ALEXAN-DRA
D'D YOU WRITE IT?
AH

I WAS JOKING!
BUT MR. PUSHKIN WRITES SUCH INTERESTING LETTERS TO YOU EVERY DAY. THIS ISN'T ALL YOU'RE GOING TO WRITE, IS IT?
YOU CAN WRITE ABOUT THE HUNT, OR...
I DON'T WANT TO WRITE ANY SORT OF LETTER...
SHOULD I WRITE IT IN YOUR PLACE?
PERHAPS YOU WOULD BE BETTER SUITED.
I WANT S...SHA TO RETURN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
I'M HIS WIFE.
I WANT HIM TO HOLD ME IN HIS ARMS AND EMBRACE ME, TIGHTLY...
I WASN'T ABLE TO TELL HER
THAT I SENT A LETTER TO MR. PUSHKIN DURING HER ABSENCE.
Close

I HAVE REREAD IT COUNTLESS TIMES
"Every night before I go to sleep, all alone, I try to think of pleasant things."
"Thank you for reporting the conditions of the house to me during my absence, my gentle Adi."


AND HE REPLIED TO ME
I WAS SO... HAPPY!

and Natalia will be inside it."
"For example, I might imagine that when I wake up tomorrow there will be a coach outside, under the morning light."

SASHA

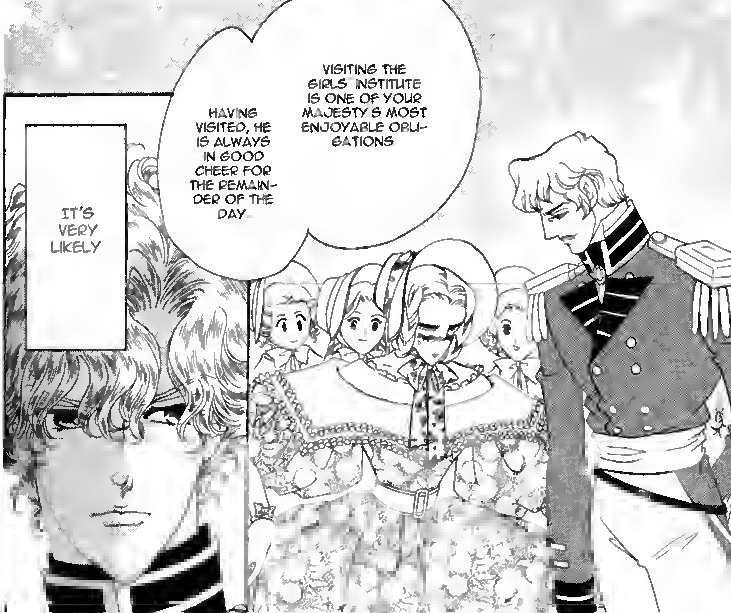
"Baron D'Anthes!"
"Don't kill it! It has children, let it go!"
"Baron!"

"I had to kill it ...
for our sake."
St. Petersburg garden, Summer

THEN
YOU WERE THE ONE WHO KILLED THE BLACK WOLF, SECOND LIEUTENANT D'ANTHES?
I SIMPLY CAME ACROSS IT AND RAISED THE ALARM
THE TSAR RAN OVER AT THE CRITICAL MOMENT
OH..
HE SAYS HE WANTS TO DECORATE OUR BEDROOM WITH THAT FUR HE IS SO PROUD OF.
I'M ATTEMPTING TO AVOID SUCH A THING.
THE IDEA OF SLEEPING BESIDE A WOLF IS SOMEWHAT ...
HO HO HO
INDEED
BUT WITH THAT EXCEPTION, THE BOUNTY OF THIS YEAR'S HUNT WAS RATHER POOR
AH- YOUR MAJESTY
THE TSAR IS HERE

HE SEEMS TO RATHER ENJOY BEING SURROUNDED BY SCHOOLGIRLS
Y-YES
HE ASKS THEM TO HAVE TEA WITH HIM
IS THERE A GIRLS SCHOOL IN RUSSIA?
Green uni form
IT WAS FOUNDED BY EMPRESS CATHERINE II STUDENTS OF THE SMOLNY INSTITUTE* WEAR THOSE UNIFORMS WHEN THEY GO FOR A STROLL.
THE TSAR HAS BEEN THEIR IDOL SINCE LONG AGO

*NOTE: AN ALL-GIRL INSTITUTION FOR GIRLS OF NOBLE ORIGIN IN ST. PETERSBURG


VISITING THE GIRLS' INSTITUTE IS ONE OF YOUR MAJESTY'S MOST ENJOYABLE OBLIGATIONS
HAVING VISITED, HE IS ALWAYS IN GOOD CHEER FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE DAY.
IT'S VERY LIKELY

YOUR SISTER, MRS. PUSHKIN
WAS SHE WELL WHEN SHE RETURNED HOME AFTER THE HUNT?
EXCUSE ME?
SHE DIDN'T COME TO THE BALL THAT WAS HELD TWO DAYS AGO
IF YOU WILL EXCUSE ME
OH, ARE YOU EKATERINA GONCHAROVA?
Y-YES, I AM!
I SEE
I HOPE SHE TAKES CARE OF HERSELF
SHE HASN'T BEEN FEELING WELL LATELY
HE ENJOYS THE SENSATION OF BEING ABLE TO TAKE CONTROL BY HIMSELF
HE CAN MAINTAIN A GOOD BALANCE IF ALLOWED TO HAVE A REST NOW AND THEN
EMPRESS?
I TRUST MY HUSBAND.
ON THE SUBJECT OF WOMEN..

I HAVE NO INTEREST IN A TEMPESTUOUS LOVE FULL OF FUTILE JEALOUSLY
SOMEHOW, THAT ASPECT OF MY PERSONALITY IS QUITE APPARENT,
SO WOMEN APPROACH THE TSAR AT EASE
SHE IS INTELLIGENT
SUCH IS EXPECTED OF THE DAUGHTER OF THE KING OF PRUSSIA
SHE IS TOO GOOD FOR NICHOLAS
WELCOME, NIKI.
LET ME TREAT YOU TO SOME TEA
WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE A RIDE ON MY BOAT?
SECOND LIEUTENANT D'ANTHES!

NATALIA NIKOLAEVNA HAS MISUNDERSTOOD SOMETHING
I WANT HER TO PUT IT OUT OF MIND
THE TWO OF YOU RE INTIMATE FRIENDS. I WOULD LIKE YOU TO TELL HER SOMETHING FOR ME.
THAT MY SLIGHT ATTEMPT TO EMBRACE HER WAS ONLY DUE TO MY ADMIRATION OF HER BEAUTY AND LOVELINESS
THAT THERE WAS NO ULTERIOR MOTIVE.
Creak
AND WHAT WOULD THAT BE?
...
SLIGHT, HE SAYS?
...
"SLIGHT ATTEMPT TO EMBRACE HER"...
...
WON'T YOU?
I'M QUITE SURE THAT WE'LL CROSS OVER FROM THE AGE OF SAILING SHIPS TO THAT OF STEAMSHIPS
IN A YEAR OR TWO
OH...
I WILL.

RUSSIA WON'T CONTINUE TO WATCH IN SILENCE
WE WILL CREATE THE STRONGEST NAVY, AND READY STEAMSHIPS WITH SPEED
YOU ARE WONDERING WHY I AM SPEAKING TO YOU OF THIS SUBJECT AREN'T YOU?
SECOND LIEUTENANT D'ANTHES

AMERICAN AND ENGLISH MERCHANT SHIP COMPANIES ARE COMPETING FOR DOMINANCE
YES, I AGREE
HE CHANGED THE SUBJECT FROM WOMEN TO SHIPS

THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS, TO PERSUADE THE KING TO ENTER THE GERMAN CONFEDERATION. WHERE PRUSSIA PLAYS A LEADING ROLE
I REQUESTED HIM TO GO TO HIS NATIVE LAND,
THE TRUTH IS THAT HE IS WORKING FOR ME
YOUR SUPPORTER, BARON HEECKEREN IS CURRENTLY TRAVELING THROUGH EUROPE
PERHAPS YOU AREN'T FOND OF THIS SUBJECT, BEING A FRENCHMAN WHO HAS SUFFERED THROUGH A POPULAR REVOLUTION
IF YOU ARE A LEGITIMIST, YOU SHOULD APPROVE OF IT
IF RUSSIA AND PRUSSIA GAIN POWER, THE EUROPEAN ABSOLUTE MONARCHIES WILL STABILIZE

HEECKEREN WANTS TO HAND EVERYTHING OVER TO YOU. ACCEPTING YOU AS HIS ADOPTED CHILD
INCLUDING HIS OWN WORLDLY WISDOM AS A DIPLOMAT, I'M SURE
HE HAS TRUMPED HIS STATUS AS A RESIDENT AMBASSADOR
OVER HIS NOBLE DUTCH ORIGINS
I ASSIGN IMPORTANT TASKS TO HIM BECAUSE HE IS A CAPABLE MAN IT MEANS NOTHING TO ME THAT HE IS A FOREIGNER
I WOULD LIKE YOU TO KEEP THIS IN MIND
HE IS LOOKING FOR A PATH THAT BENEFITS BOTH COUNTRIES, RUSSIA AND HOLLAND
YOUR MAJESTY
COUNT BENKENDORF IS AT THE OPPOSITE BANK
SOMETHING MUST HAVE HAPPENED
IN FRANCE HE WAS CALLED "THE EUROPEAN MILITARY POLICE".

I'm currently at your hometown in the French region of Alsace
Baron Georges-Charles d'Anthes
I SUPPOSE HE LIVES UP TO THAT TITLE
I will be sure to fulfill his expectations.
The conversation with your father was a success
He sincerely supported the idea and told me to take care of you.
I beg you to behave discreetly
Perhaps your youth makes this difficult for you. "Van Heeckeren" is a surname of which no one would be ashamed
Within half a year, I will be able to call you my son
If this final task with which the Tsar has entrusted me turns out well,
your promotion to First Lieutenant will be easily acquired

KURSA-NOV THE ANTIQUES DEALER IS HERE
MR D'ANTHES
Do you have any com-plaint against Victoria?
Count Nesebrode informed me of such in a letter
You didn't attend the evening party that was held to celebrate Victoria's naming day
HERE IT IS!
I MET MR. HEECKEREN IN ROME.
I'M HERE TO DELIVER THE GOODS THAT HE PURCHA-SED AT THE TIME.
I SEE.
IN SUCH CASE, YOU MIGHT CHECK THE ITEM TO ENSURE THAT IT SUFFERED NO DAMAGES DURING THE DELIVERY
IT'S A PITY THAT MR. HEECKEREN IS NOT PRESENT

ITS FACE RESEMBLES MY OWN
THIS STATUE IS IN SUCH BAD TASTE.
IT WAS CREATED IN IMITATION OF A FAMOUS SCULPTURE FROM ANCIENT TIMES
LAOCOON
HE WAS TROJAN PRIEST THAT WAS CURSED TO DIE BY BEING STRANGLED BY AN ENORMOUS SNAKE.
SIGH
MR. D'ANTHES?

WHAT AN UNPLEASANT SENSATION
AM I BECOMING ACCUSTOMED TO THIS?
IS THIS WHAT I TRULY WANT?
BARON D'ANTHES
A GUEST IS CALLING FOR YOU.
IN SUCH A PLACE?
THE GUEST RAN STRAIGHT TO THIS PRIVATE ROOM!
YOU'RE EXAGGERATING

MRS LUZHKOV...
WHY...
I WANT YOU TO...
KILL MY HUSBAND
ASK HIM FOR A DUEL!
DON'T WORRY! WITH YOUR SKILL, YOU'RE SURE TO WIN
I BEG YOU!
HE BECOMES MORE AND MORE VIOLENT EACH DAY
DIVORCE IS PROHIBITED IN THIS COUNTRY
HELP ME BE RID OF HIM!

DURING THIS YEAR THAT WE HAVE BEEN APART
I HAVE SUFFERED SO MUCH
I KNOW THAT YOU ARE MY ONLY LOVE
A YEAR AGO, I WAS BROUGHT TO TEARS WHENEVER I THOUGHT OF THIS BEAUTIFUL WOMAN'S SUFFERING...
MRS. LUZHKOV...
I... HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR HUSBAND

...!
I ONLY FEEL PITY
NOW...

I'M TIRED OF MOZART'S OPERA...
PAPA!
WASN'T MR D'ANTHES SUPPOSED TO COME HERE TONIGHT?
DON'T WORRY, VICTORIA HE'LL COME
HE TOLD ME THAT HIS MILITARY DUTIES MIGHT CAUSE HIM TO BE LATE BUT THAT HE WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY ATTEND
THEY'RE TALKING ABOUT BARON D'ANTHES
IS HE GOING TO COME? HE'LL BE IN THE BOX NEXT TO US!
THERE ARE RUMORS ABOUT AN ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN BARON D'ANTHES AND THE DAUGHTER OF NESSELROD, THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
IT SEEMS AS THOUGH THEY WERE TRUE
Y-YES..
MRS VYAZEMSKY

HE...
HE IS GOING TO SIT NEXT TO THAT GIRL...
HE IS GOING TO SIT THERE...
BUT DON'T YOU THINK SHE IS A BIT TOO YOUNG FOR HIM?

I'M SORRY...
I ACCEPTED YOUR INVITATION, AND NOW...
PLEASE GO BACK TO YOUR SEAT TO ENJOY THE PERFORMANCE
I WILL TAKE CARE OF NATALIA
NATALIA NIKOLAEVNA...
YOU...

OH,
IS SOMETHING WRONG, NATALIA NIKOLAEVNA?
NATALIA, ARE YOU NOT FEELING WELL?

ARE YOU PERHAPS WITH CHILD AGAIN?
PER-HAPS ....
LAST YEAR, I FELT THE SAME...
WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME, NATALIA?
I'M SORRY
PERHAPS I SHOULD RETURN HOME TONIGHT
VERY WELL
PREPARE A COACH
Yes madam

I PREPARED THE COACH FOR MRS PUSHKIN
I WASN'T ABLE TO FIND THE CLOAK IN THE CLOAK-ROOM
WAS IT RED?
IT'S BLUE-GREEN
WON'T YOU ENTER THE COACH?
YES
!
BARON D'ANTHES!
GOOD EVENING
I'VE MISSED THE FIRST ACT
MINISTER NESSEL-RODE AND HIS DAUGHTER ARE AWAITING YOUR ARRIVAL.
I'LL BE ON MY WAY, THEN.

ARE YOU NOT FEELING WELL?
MRS PUSHKIN, IS THERE SOMETHING AMISS?
OTO
I'LL ACCOMPANY YOU TO THE COACH.
I APOLOGIZE FOR THE BOTHER.
THANK YOU, BARON D'ANTHES.
IT'S OF NO CONSEQUENCE
YOU SHOULD MAKE HASTE
IT'S TOO LATE FOR HASTE BY NOW
NATALIA
WAIT FOR ME
I'M GOING TO THE CLOAKROOM TO SEARCH FOR YOUR CLOAK

SHALL WE GO?
THIS IS UNNECESSARY
THANK YOU FOR ESCORTING HER, BARON.
YOUR HEALTH IS VERY IMPORTANT.
MIND IT WELL, NATALIA NIKOLAEVNA
I'LL WRITE TO YOU LATER
"YOUR HEALTH IS VERY IMPORTANT"—
MRS PUSHKIN?
I'M PERFECTLY FINE THERE'S NO NEED TO..
WOR-
DIZZY

ARE YOU WITH CHILD?

IS IT TRUE?

HE WAS THE ONE PERSON I DIDN'T WANT TO HAVE KNOW
A-
AGAIN?
"AGAIN", YOU SAY...
A YEAR AGO I COULD EASILY E-VADE THESE SORTS OF THINGS
WHY?
I SEE

THIS ISN'T SOMETHING THAT SHOULD CAUSE EMBARRASSMENT
WHY, THEN, DO I FEEL THIS WAY?
YOU'RE WITH CHILD OFTEN AREN'T YOU?
GIVE ME YOUR HAND
THERE IS NO NEED
DIDN'T YOU GIVE BIRTH IN JUNE?
I HAVE NO OBLIGATION TO ANSWER THAT!
I SHOULDN'T HAVE ASKED A QUESTION LIKE THAT
THAT'S TRUE, BUT...
I'M SORRY
NOTHING WILL COME OF THIS ANGER
I'M AN INDECENT MAN,
SO I CAN'T KEEP MYSELF FROM SPEAKING OF IT
I'VE IMAGINED IT
EVERY YEAR, HE HAS MADE YOU PREGNANT TEN OUT OF EVERY TWELVE MONTHS WHAT SORT OF MAN IS HE?
HE WANTS YOU TO BE HIS POSSESSION, AND ONLY HIS

YOU WERE THE ONE PERSON I DIDN'T WANT TO LEARN ABOUT THIS
HOW PRE-SUMPTUOUS YOU ARE!
ARE YOU AND YOUR HUSBAND ON SUCH GOOD TERMS?
Slap
!
!
I WAS THE ONE PERSON ?
WHY?

I
I KNEW IT ALL ALONG...
BUT I DIDN'T WANT TO RECOGNIZE IT.
I LOVE HIM.
I DO!
WHY?
NOTHING WILL COME OF IT...
BECAUSE I HATE YOU...
BUT EVEN SO...

I
YOU'RE LYING
I WANT TO BREAK OFF RELATIONS WITH YOU
TAP
STOP!
BUT MY WORDS DO NOT
YOUR WORDS EXPRESS THE VERY OPPOSITE OF WHAT IS IN YOUR HEART

ドU
!
DON'T LOOK INTO MY HEART ANY MORE THAN YOU ALREADY HAVE!

I...
LOVE YOU.

I LIKE YOU
VERY MUCH,
NATALIA NIKOLAE-VNA
FAR AWAY
I CAN HEAR THE MUSIC ON THE STAGE

MY WORLD IS TURNING
BECOMING DISTORTED
BREAKING TO PIECES

NATALIA?
EKATERINA!